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TAGS: [KS](#) [MARR](#) [MNUC](#) [PARM](#) [PREL](#) [KN](#)
SUBJECT: SPI 11: U.S.-ROK SECURITY POLICY INITIATIVE TALKS

Classified By: A/DCM Joseph Y. Yun. Reasons 1.4 (b,d).

SUMMARY

¶1. (C) The eleventh U.S.-ROK Security Policy Initiative talks (SPI 11) took place February 7-8, 2007 in Seoul. Topics addressed included the transfer of wartime operational command (OPCON), the transition of Armistice Maintenance Responsibilities (AMRs), USFK camp returns, the status of the Yongsan Relocation Plan (YRP), security cooperation in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Lebanon, and air-to-ground training range issues. The discussions held at SPI 11 also prepared the way for the first ministerial meeting between Defense Minister Kim Jang-soo and Secretary Gates to be held in Washington on February 23, 2007.

¶2. (C) Despite low expectations going into SPI 11, limited progress was made on a number of key Alliance issues. When Deputy Under Secretary of Defense (DUSD) and U.S. head of delegation Richard P. Lawless met with Defense Minister Kim prior to the start of SPI 11, the minister pledged his strong personal commitment to carrying out the Yongsan Relocation Plan (YRP). As a result, the U.S. and ROK delegations concluded a Record of Discussion at the SPI 11 YRP small group session on February 7 that included agreement on a number of steps to speed up ROK implementation of YRP (full text at para 19).

¶3. (C) In the February 8 SPI plenary sessions, the ROK delegation voiced its commitment to processing future camp returns under the SOFA process, to avoid the contentious politicization of environmental concerns that had plagued the first series of camp returns in 2006. On the issue of the ROK assuming Armistice Maintenance Responsibilities (AMRs), the ROK delegation acknowledged the existence of the ongoing authority-responsibility mismatch highlighted by the UNC Commander, General B.B. Bell, during his January 18 press conference in Seoul, and agreed to establish a Senior Working Group to discuss the issue. Aside from that, however, the ROKG held to its legalistic interpretation that there are missions only the UNC can perform. Finally, within the plenary session impasse continued over the timing of wartime OPCON transfer. Assistant Minister of Defense for Policy Jeon Jei-guk firmly reiterated that 2012 was the earliest possible date that ROK forces could assume wartime OPCON.
END SUMMARY.

WARTIME OPCON TRANSFER

14. (C) Assistant Minister Jeon Jei-guk opened the discussion on OPCON transfer by stating that it would not be possible for ROK forces to exercise wartime OPCON before 2012. Elaborating on the timeline and requirements, Jeon stated that the ROK forces would need at least five years to obtain a war-fighting capability on par with the current Combined Forces Command (CFC), and an additional three years to create a war-fighting command, obtain National Assembly approval, and develop a new doctrine and joint war plan. Jeon said that after these prerequisites are met, the ROK forces would need to practice the new war plan for at least two additional years. As such, 2012 would be the earliest possible wartime OPCON transfer date, Jeon said. He went on to urge that the U.S. Government accept the ROK proposal for 2012, arguing that without agreement on a specific date implementation of OPCON transfer would remain "only theoretical." Jeon noted, however, that the Combined Implementation Working Group (CIWG) established on January 31, 2007 had already begun developing the implementation planning system and was currently discussing establishment of the ROK theater war-fighting command.

15. (C) Jeon predicted that public opposition to, and politicization of the wartime OPCON transfer issue would continue to grow in the months leading up to the ROK presidential election in December 2007. He referred to South Korean public opinion polls stating that over 55 percent of the population preferred that the transfer take place on or after 2012. Jeon warned that if the issue were allowed to continue to become a campaign issue, it would do damage to the U.S.-ROK Alliance. He requested U.S. understanding of the sensitivities caused by the political situation in the ROK.

16. (C) DUSD Lawless stated that a decision on a firm date for OPCON transition (the X-date) was preferred and required for planning purposes, but emphasized the necessity of finalizing and starting the transition plan. He noted that it had been agreed at the 2006 Security Consultative Meeting (SCM) that X-date would fall somewhere between October 2009 and March 2012, and stated that it was the USFK Commander's professional judgment that the transition could be completed over a 36-month period of time at low risk. More recent discussions with General Bell, he continued, reconfirmed that assessment, indicating the transfer could be completed far earlier than 2012. DUSD Lawless rejected the ROK explanation of the need for 2-3 additional years, noting that many aspects of planning and implementation could be managed in parallel. DUSD Lawless emphasized that regardless of the determination of the X-date, it was most important to finish the road map and get the implementation process started by July 2007.

17. (C) Responding to the political concerns highlighted by AM Jeon, DUSD Lawless explained that public opinion was a concern for the U.S. Government as well, and emphasized the need to demonstrate to both our publics and both our legislatures that a way forward had been agreed. DUSD Lawless pointed out that the end product of this process would be a revitalized and strengthened U.S.-ROK alliance, and that it could be implemented within the suggested timeline without weakening the Alliance position vis-a-vis North Korea. He then shared his positive assessment of ROK military command and control capabilities.

18. (C) Noting the need to inform the CIWG of an X-date, however, DUSD Lawless reminded Jeon that the OSD letter of December 18, 2006 had proposed a "confidential X-date" which would not necessarily be the actual transfer date, but would provide the planners with a point of focus. Jeon replied that the ROKG would engage in parallel planning and implementation whenever possible, but maintained that an actual planning date was needed. He said the ROK could not

accept the proposal for a "confidential planning date" because having multiple X-dates would only cause confusion. However, he said the ROK would agree to start implementing the Strategic Transition Plan (STP) after its completion in July 2007, and to report progress made to the SCM in October 2007.

ARMISTICE MAINTENANCE RESPONSIBILITIES

¶9. (C) Turning to the issue of the ROK taking on Armistice maintenance responsibilities (AMRs), DUSD Lawless said it was imperative that before the ROK takes full command responsibility for any potential war fight, it must assume clear responsibility for Armistice maintenance and the management of any crisis occurring on the peninsula. Pointing to a basic principal of military operations -- the Unity of Command -- DUSD Lawless stated that a single commander (the ROK Commander after OPCON transfer is completed) must be responsible for the entire spectrum of potential conflict, from Armistice maintenance to Armistice violation to crisis to all out war, a transition that could take place in a matter of minutes.

¶10. (C) DUSD Lawless noted that despite our best efforts during previous SPI and SCM discussions, misunderstandings continued on the role and the future of the United Nations Command. He pointed out that uninformed media speculation -- ranging from U.S. abandonment of the UNC to U.S. plans to utilize UNC to retain operational control of ROK forces -- was very unhelpful. General Bell's public statement of 18 January appears to have helped clarify the issue, Lawless said, but misinterpretations continued.

¶11. (C) DUSD Lawless noted it might be helpful to remember that the UNC was not established to maintain the Armistice. Rather, the UNC Commander assumed that temporary mission when the Armistice was signed because he then controlled all the forces on the peninsula. That state of affairs functioned well enough until 1994 when peacetime OPCON was transferred to the ROK with the signing of Strategic Directive No. 2. Since then, the military authority-responsibility mismatch has been a growing concern. While the problem was manageable because the commander of the UNC and the Combined Forces Command (CFC) were one in the same person, Lawless pointed out, the UNC Commander's position would become untenable with the disestablishment of the CFC.

¶12. (C) DUSD Lawless assured the ROK delegation that the USFK Commander would remain as the UNC Commander and that UNC would assume a supporting role after the transfer of wartime OPCON, similar to the supporting role USFK will provide to the ROK military. Likewise, the UNC Sending States would continue to be asked to support deterrence and potential war, as in previous decades, Lawless added. He reiterated that the transition would represent a win-win situation for both countries, and shared his confidence in the ROK military, stating that the ROK authorities and the UNC Commander could implement the transitioning of AMRs in a way that ensured a continued high-level of deterrence.

¶13. (C) Cautioning against constructing an exhaustive list of Armistice maintenance sub-tasks, DUSD Lawless proposed forming a senior working group, consisting of representatives from MOFAT, MND, ROK JCS, UNC U-5, UNCMAC and the Embassy, to further discuss the AMR issue and put forth policy recommendations at future SPI and SCM meetings. AM Jeon welcomed the working group proposal, commenting that the ROKG had considered making a similar suggestion, and shared his hope that the group would be able to bridge the gap between the USG and ROKG positions on the AMR issue. He underscored, however, that there were important political, diplomatic and legal aspects to the discussion that affected the ROK position and would therefore limit its flexibility on resolving the issue.

¶14. (C) Jeon stressed that although there were numerous AMR

functions currently carried out by ROK forces, there were missions that could only be performed by the UNC, specifically citing the responsibility for investigating Armistice violations that may occur between North and South Korea. In the end, the UNC would have to retain ultimate responsibility, Jeon concluded. Referring to that as the "core issue," Jeon stated that the ROK JCS had no legal authority to replace the UNC in that role. He cited the primary purposes of the UNC as defeating aggression and maintaining Armistice responsibilities during peace time. If one of the main functions were to transfer to the ROK, there would be no basis for the UNC to exist in peace time, Jeon stated, adding that "this is what North Korea wants."

¶15. (C) Senior Coordinator for U.S.-ROK Security Cooperation Hwang Seung-hyun acknowledged that a command authority-responsibility mismatch did exist, and agreed it should be resolved within the current command structure, but he too reiterated what he called legal limitations on the ROKG. Hwang stated that MOFAT views the Armistice Agreement as a legal document, a cornerstone for the prevention of armed conflicts on the Korean peninsula. He echoed Jeon's concerns on the need for the document to stay in effect, as well as on the DPRK's potential misinterpretation of the changes proposed by the United States. Hwang shared that if AMRs are comprehensively transferred to the ROKG, other signatories and players on the Korean peninsula might have "other interpretations," creating an opportunity for the DPRK to "take advantage."

¶16. (C) Responding to that point, EAP/K ROK Unit Chief Andrew Hyde noted that the fear of North Korea's possible misinterpretation should not be a controlling factor. Rather, Hyde suggested, the ROK should seek confidently to lay out its plans to the DPRK and indicate this as an interim arrangement until a permanent peace regime is signed in the future. Lawless agreed this would be an opportunity for the ROKG to pursue military-to-military confidence building measures with the KPA.

CAMP RETURNS

¶17. (C) Emphasizing the need to inject speed and efficiency back into the camp return process, DUSD Lawless said the USG supported conducting future camp returns by adhering to the SOFA procedures. This should include the five bio-slurped camps scheduled to be returned to the ROK in May 2007, he said, noting past Ministry of Environment (MOE) objections to processing the returns under the SOFA guidelines as a major obstacle. DUSD Lawless added that the USG considered the nineteen camps listed in his letter of June 15, 2006 to have already been returned to the ROKG, and concluded that no further action would be undertaken by the USG.

¶18. (C) AM Jeon said he was fully aware of past environmental concerns, but confirmed the ROKG's commitment to resolving such issues through the SOFA process. Jeon offered assurances that MND and MOFAT would work with MOE more effectively in the future to keep the process within the SOFA channel. Jeon noted that SOFA Joint Committee documents for the return of fourteen of the nineteen bases mentioned in DUSD Lawless' letter of June 15 had already been signed by the ROKG and passed to the U.S. Joint Committee chair. Both Jeon and BG Choi of the MND International Defense Policy Bureau said they welcomed future base returns under the SOFA procedures.

YONGSAN RELOCATION PLAN

¶19. (C) In a separate small group meeting on February 7, the U.S. and ROK delegations agreed to the following Record of Discussion and its inclusion as an official part of the SPI 11 proceedings. The memorandum was signed by MND International Defense Policy Bureau Director General Kim

Kyu-hyun and Assistant Chief of Staff UNC/CFC/USFK MajGen
Duane Thiessen.

BEGIN TEXT:

RECORD OF DISCUSSION REGARDING
SMALL GROUP SECURITY POLICY INITIATIVE (SPI) MEETING RESULTS
7 FEBRUARY 2007

¶1. This document is the record of discussion at the SPI-11
ROK-U.S. Small Group Meeting on relocation held at the ROK
Ministry of National Defense (MND) on 7 February 2007.

¶2. The ROK and U.S. sides have discussed the following
measures to accelerate the implementation of the Camp
Humphreys Master Plan (MP):

a. ROK agreed to expeditiously grant Land Parcel 1A as
designated.

b. ROK agreed to provide a timely review of a U.S.
proposed list of executable projects and measures sequenced
by thirty, sixty, and ninety-day increments.

c. U.S. agreed to provide a timely review of the ROK
presented a plan to begin early construction of roads
required for access and development at Camp Humphreys.

d. ROK will migrate all remaining households before 31
March 2007.

e. ROK agreed to grant Land parcels 2 and 3 to the U.S.
with the target date of late May.

f. U.S. agreed to review a ROK proposal for a Joint
Task Force to execute a combined study to determine
recommended measures to the Program Management Consortium
(PMC).

g. ROK confirmed the ability to fund accelerated
Yongsan Relocation Program construction as required.

h. ROK agreed to 12-16 February target release window
for second phase Request for Proposals for the PMC contract
with contract duration of five years with an option to extend
the contract, when necessary, and without the "IMPLEMENTATION
STRATEGY" containing the completion timeline. Additionally,
PMCs may formulate their own separate strategy.

¶3. Additionally the ROK and U.S. agreed to the following:

a. U.S. acknowledged MND requirements to submit a MP
report to the National Assembly before approval by the SOFA
Joint Committee.

b. U.S. acknowledged MND target date of late February
for MP submission to the National Assembly to the National
assembly.

c. MND will provide a summary of key points of the MP
presentation to the U.S. before making required reports to
the ROK national Assembly.

Duane D. Thiessen
Major General, USMC
Assistant Chief of Staff C/J5
ROK-U.S. Combined Forces Command

KIM, Kyu-hyun
Director General
International Defense Policy Bureau
Ministry of National Defense, ROK

END TEXT.

SECURITY COOPERATION: IRAQ, AFGHANISTAN, LEBANON

¶20. (C) Turning to international security cooperation, DUSD
Lawless said there was no finer statement on the positive
status of the U.S.-ROK relationship than the ROK
contributions to stabilization and reconstruction efforts in
Iraq, Afghanistan and Lebanon. Just as Iraq and Afghanistan
had figured prominently in Secretary Gate's mid-January
ministerial meeting with his Australian counterpart, Lawless
predicted there would be a similar focus at the U.S.-ROK
defense ministerial on February 23 in Washington. He pointed
out that Iraq and Afghanistan were likely to dominate the DOD

agenda for the remainder of 2007. He provided the ROK delegation with an overview of the President's new Iraq Strategy and the way forward in Afghanistan, and pledged that the Pentagon would provide Defense Minister Kim with a detailed update on the situation in Iraq during his February 23 visit to Washington.

¶21. (C) On the situation in Afghanistan, DUSD Lawless noted that it was no less important than the situation in Iraq, and was an example of where U.S. and NATO/ISAF forces have succeeded in providing a good measure of stability. He said that 2007 is a critical year in Afghanistan as well, and noted that the United States had recently committed additional resources of USD 11 billion to the reconstruction of Afghanistan. NATO partners had also decided to extend and expand their contributions to the effort, Lawless noted.

¶22. (C) Thanking DUSD Lawless for his briefing on the situations in Iraq and Afghanistan, and the United States' policy direction for the future, AM Jeon voiced ROK support for the President's new Iraq Policy as the best way to bring stability to the Iraqi people. Jeon then provided an update on the deployment activities of ROK forces in Iraq and Afghanistan, noting that the ROK National Assembly had extended both deployments in December 2006. It had nonetheless been very difficult to secure National Assembly support, Jeon explained, and that attaching certain conditions for ROK troop withdrawal to the bills had been inevitable. Jeon said ROK troops in Iraq and Afghanistan remain devoted to completing their missions, but stated that the Zaytun unit in Iraq would be reduced to 1200 troops by April, and that all ROK troops in Afghanistan would be withdrawn by the end of 2007.

¶23. (C) Noting the political realities that had affected passage of the troop extension legislation, DUSD Lawless nonetheless expressed disappointment that the ROK troops would be departing Afghanistan at the end of the year. He stressed the importance of maintaining a strong presence in Afghanistan, noting that a continued ROK presence would be highly valued by the people of Afghanistan, as well as by NATO forces. DUSD Lawless said he hoped the ROK would give serious consideration to leading a Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) in Afghanistan.

¶24. (C) Deputy Director General for MND's International Policy Bureau BG Choi Jong-il noted that the eight ROK military personnel currently participating in a PRT in Afghanistan were separate from the general deployment of ROK forces there. BG Choi asked if the United States was requesting an extension of current ROK participation in PRTs, or would like the ROK to increase their commitment to PRTs overall. DUSD Lawless responded that NATO was likely to ask for extended commitments from a number of partners and suggested the ROK could make an important contribution by leading a PRT in its entirety.

¶25. (C) In Lebanon, AM Jeon said the ROK was committed to deploying a BN-level Infantry unit with organic engineer, medical and transportation assets as part of the UNIFIL mission in Lebanon this summer. Kim Jung-sup, Director of MND's International Policy Division, briefed the U.S. delegation on the deployment plan. Kim said the United Nations requested troop contributions in August 2006, spurring the National Assembly to pass a bill authorizing ROK troop deployment in December of that year. The ROK received the UN-proposed mission in January 2007. It includes monitoring and securing supply routes in the southern Tyre coastal areas, Kim said, adding that ROK troops are scheduled for 6 to 8 weeks of pre-deployment training through June and will be deployed to Lebanon in two groups in June or July. The headquarters facility will also need to be built, which will take another three months after UNIFIL provides the site, Kim concluded.

¶26. (C) On the training range issue, AM Jeon said the ROKG had made every effort to complete construction of the Jik Do air-to-ground training facility by the end of 2006, after securing Kunsan City approval for the WISS equipment installation in September. However, high waves and sub-zero temperatures had resulted in construction being halted on December 18, causing a delay in the January 2007 completion deadline. The good news, Jeon said, was that 90 percent of the superstructure was complete and construction would resume in early March. That would be followed by installation of the WISS equipment from April to June. In order to expedite the installation process, Jeon requested that the United States coordinate with the WISS manufacturer to ship and test the equipment prior to the April construction completion date. Major General Thiessen replied that was not possible, as the equipment mounting could not be fabricated to the specifications of the superstructure until construction was complete and a measurement survey was conducted.

¶27. (C) DUSD Lawless thanked AM Jeon for the ROK efforts to complete construction of the Jik Do range, and for providing the 7th U.S. Air Force access to Pilsung range in the interim. He noted, however, that the delay at Jik Do has significantly impacted the U.S. ability to maintain air crew qualifications and operational readiness on the peninsula. He noted that the ROKG had committed to addressing the issue over a year ago, and that the unresolved issue went beyond just completing the Jik Do range. He explained that the underlying problem was a lack of coordination in airspace and range management over the entire peninsula. MajGen Thiessen noted the ROKG has yet to assume responsibility for the administration of the Pilsung range, despite an agreement to do so by August 2005. In addition, DUSD Lawless and MajGen Thiessen proposed development of a combined, centrally-managed scheduling system for air-to-air and air-to-ground training that would fully meet both ROK and U.S. Air Force requirements.

¶28. (C) AM Jeon said related discussions were ongoing between the ROKAF and U.S. 7th AF, and DG Kim added that the ROKG believed that progress in the AF-level discussion forum was necessary before raising the issue at SPI. DUSD Lawless responded that the AF-to-AF discussions, like the Jik Do range itself, would only put a "band-aid" on a system that does not work. He pointed out that only discussions at the MND policy level about a new nation-wide system would address the core problem. He stressed that it was critical to discuss a comprehensive solution to the problem in the coming months, noting that otherwise it will have to be discussed at the next SCM. Maintaining adequate training and proficiency levels, whether on or off-peninsula, was vital, the U.S. side explained. Noting the importance and complexity of the issue, both sides agreed to continue both working- and policy-level discussions in the margins of the February 23 ministerial and at the next SPI.

FEB 23 DEFENSE MINISTER VISIT TO WASHINGTON

¶29. (C) AM Jeon offered appreciation to the USG for accepting the ROKG proposal for the February 23 visit of Defense Minister Kim Jang-soo to Washington. Jeon said the ROK proposed agenda for the ministerial would include:

- 1) Outlook on the North Korean nuclear issue following the Six Party Talks;
- 2) The Global War on Terror and the new U.S. Iraq Strategy;
- 3) Wartime OPCON transfer;
- 4) USFK Base relocation;
- 5) Camp returns; and
- 6) Foreign Military Sales (FMS) status upgrade.

Jeon noted that the FMS issue resided with the U.S. Congress, but said DG Kim wanted to convey his personal interest in the issue to Secretary Gates. DUSD Lawless replied that OSD would provide formal comments on the proposed agenda within a

few days.

PARTICIPANTS

130. (U) Participants List

United States

Mr. Richard P. Lawless, Deputy Under Secretary of Defense,
ISA/AP, OSD
MajGen Duane D. Thiessen, CJ5, USFK
Mr. Davis Tindoll, Director IMCOM-Korea (Installation
Management Command)
Mr. Andrew Hyde, ROK Unit Chief, DoS / Washington DC
Mr. David Jonathan Wolff, Pol-Mil Chief, DoS / AMEMB Seoul
Col Robert Gardner, Deputy Chief, Policy, C5, CFC
COL Kip McCormick, Defense Attach American Embassy, Seoul
COL Daniel Russell, Assistant Chief of Staff, Engineer, USFK
Mr. David Rathgeber, SA to Judge Advocate, USFK
Mr. Robert Mounts, SA to the Deputy Cdr, USFK for SOFA
LTC Michael Finnegan, Senior Country Director for Korea,
ISA/AP, OSD
LCDR Kevin Aanestad, NK Desk Officer, NEA Div, Pol-Mil
Affairs, J5, JCS
LTC Steve Gransback, Deputy Chief Policy Branch, J5-J, USFK
Lt Col Bob Loynd, Chief Policy Coordination, C5, CFC
LTC Ernie Lee, Korea Desk, J5, USPACOM
Lt Col Rico Malebranche, Camp Returns / Ranges AO, J5-J, USFK
MAJ Marcus Acosta, Chief Strategy Branch J5 Policy, USFK
MAJ Doug Acoba, Northeast Asia Analyst, DIA
MAJ Steve Park, Joint US Military Affairs Group-Korea, MND
Liaison Policy
Mr. Kim Chang Uk, KGS-11, Command Interpreter, USFK

Republic of Korea

Dr. Jeon Jei-guk, Assistant Minister of Defense for Policy,
MND
Dr. Kim Kyou-hyun, Director General, International Defense
Policy Bureau, MND
BG Choi Jong-il, Deputy Director General for International
Policy Bureau, MND
COL Song Seung-jong, Director, U.S. Policy Division, MND
Mr. Kim Jung-Sup, Director, International Policy Division,
MND
COL Park Sang-ryool, Director, USFK Base Relocation
Negotiation Team, MND
LTC Kim Kyong-ok, Deputy Director, U.S. Policy Division, MND
LTC Yin Sung-hwan, Action Officer, U.S. Policy Division, MND
RADM Kim Joong-ryun, Director Strategy Planning, ROK JCS J-5
COL Park Chan-joo, Chief Combined Implementation Working
Group, MND
LTC Hyun Hong-sik, Action Officer, ROK JCS
Mr. Hwang Seung-hyun, Senior Coordinator, ROK-U.S. Security
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Mr. Lee Jeong-kyu, Director, North America Division III, MOFAT
Mr. Jeong Yeon-doo, First Secretary, North American Division
III, MOFAT
Mr. Lee Hong-yup, First Secretary, North America Division
III, MOFAT
Mr. Kim Hak-joo, Director Environmental Policy Division
COL Youn Je-uk, Defense Policy, Blue House
Mr. Park Jae-min, Defense Policy Office, Blue House
1LT Yoo Jae-in, Interpreter, MND

131. (U) DUSD Lawless has cleared this message.

VERSHBOW